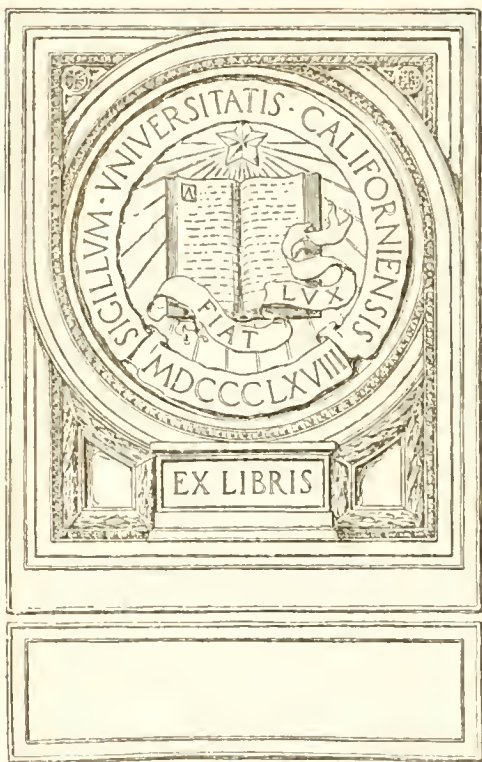


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ВОЛЫГА СУДАРЬ БУСЛАЕВИЧЪ.

· BYLINY BOOK
HERO TALES OF RUSSIA ·

Told from the Russian by

MARION CHILTON HARRISON

PI

With Illustrations by

MRS. HUGH STEWART

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PREFACE.

This is a Byliny Book. What does "Byliny" mean? It is a Russian word, and it means stories about *What-has-Been*, what happened in Russia in the old days long ago. We all read about the Greek heroes Jason and Perseus and Theseus and Heracles. The Russians had splendid heroes too, who met with wonderful adventures. Russia and France and Italy and England are fighting side by side a great fight for freedom, and these old heroes of Russia fought for freedom too, against great barbarian armies of Huns and Tartars. The Russians are our brave friends, our "Allies," as we call them now, and it is good to get to know about their heroes of olden times.

We all know and honour our French Allies, and most of us try to speak French. We are proud to read in history how our William the Conqueror came over from France and brought with him many good laws and customs, and, best of all, beautiful French words that have now become English—why, the very word *beauty* came to us from France. But Russia is much further away than France, and very few of us learn to speak Russian, or even to read it.

PREFACE.

Far the best way to get to know people is to learn their language, but it is not quite so easy to learn to read Russian as it is to read French, because the Russians use different letters. You will see Russian letters in the pictures¹; they are beautiful, delightful things, and some of them are like English, so it is exciting to try and make them out, but some of them are like Greek, for the Russians always liked the Greeks better than the Romans.

The Russian names of the heroes look a little strange at first, but they are not really hard to pronounce. There are a great many Russian heroes, but this book only tells about four of them, Volgá and Mikúla and Svyatogór and Ilyá. Volgá is quite short and easy, and so is Mikúla, which is pronounced as if it was written Mikóolla. Svyatogór looks rather hard, but you only have to remember to say it like this—Svyätägórr, and you must roll the r's as if you were a Scotsman. The Russians put the accent on the end of their words much oftener than the English. We say Í-văn and they say *Eeváhn*. And so it is with the last hero, Ilyá; he is pronounced *Eelyáh*. Besides the heroes there is Vladímir the king, and he is called Vladéemir. The only really hard word to say right is *Byliny* itself, and that you can call Bwiléeny, but our English lips do not make quite the Russian sound.

These heroes Volgá and Ilyá and the rest lived very

¹ The Russian titles are translated in the List of Illustrations, p. xv.

PREFACE.

long ago, and their great city was not Petrograd but Kiev (Kieff). Petrograd means "Peter's fortified town," and we all know how till the war it used to be called Peters-burg. But if you look on the map you will find no Petrograd, only Kiev on the river Dnieper, which winds down to the Black Sea. The old Russian heroes used to sail down the river on through the Black Sea down to Constantinople, and there of course they met the Greeks, and the Greeks taught them to be Christians. That was in the days of good King Vladimir, and he was reigning before our William the Conqueror, hundreds of years before Peter the Great came to Holland and England and learnt to build boats, and made the great city of Petrograd.

But though the heroes lived so long ago, they are never forgotten. The Russian children in the village schools learn about Volga and Ilya as soon as they can read, and old minstrels in far away villages beyond lake Onéga and even in Siberia sing the Byliny, the songs of *What-has-Been* to the peasants as they sit round the fire at night. I have seen a picture of one of these singers, an old peasant over seventy, with a long white beard and shaggy hair and bright deep-set eyes. He could not write or read, and his voice was rather cracked, but when he sang the old songs he was all on fire, and he sang them so splendidly that the villagers crowded round to hear. The old men say that the young ones will not learn to sing the songs because they are *gramotnyye*, "grammar-people," who read books and learn to write—what a pity.

PREFACE.

A learned Russian called Hilferding went to North Russia to live among the peasants and listen to these stories. The peasants are very poor, and are shy with strangers, but they learned to love and trust Hilferding, and sang their songs to him. It is nice to know that he was able to help the peasants, and get them a little more money and food. Other learned men had been before Hilferding, but nearly all the stories in this book were collected by him, so we like to remember his name.

It is the peasants who sing the Byliny, not the nobles, and two of the greatest Russian heroes, Ilyá and Mikúla, are peasants' sons. Mikúla is a ploughman. It sounds strange to us that a ploughman should be a hero; but the Russians did not feel like that. They love their land with all their hearts. Some of it has very black fertile soil, but some of it is very hard and full of stones, and sometimes of forests to be cleared, and the man who does all this is a hero. The Russians sing a hymn to the honour of Mikúla; it ends "Glory to thee, good Mikúla, the peasant who worked." In one of the pictures you see Volgá, the prince, come to beg Mikúla to leave his plough and join his warriors. Mikúla was sad, but a man must leave even his work to defend his country. Mikúla is my favourite of all the heroes.

The peasant heroes, Mikúla and great Ilyá, are very proud and independent, and sometimes not very respectful to the King; they seem to think they are as good as he is, and so they were. It is their country

PREFACE.

they love, and their beautiful city of Kiev and its Church, and in those old days they had not learned that the King stands for the country. Ilyá is always wanting to get to Kiev; you see him on the cover of this book, riding up to the Holy City. It is like Jerusalem to him, and he was buried there. But though he dreams of the City, he loves the place where he was born, near Múrom. Múrom is a real place still, with forests round it and a river full of fish. The peasants in the old days owned the land in common, so each village was like a little kingdom. Ilyá hates the dog, King Kalin, because he slays the villagers.

Svyatogór's name means Holy Mountain. He is very strong and huge, like a mountain, but he is clumsy and rather boastful. He boasted he could lift anything, but he soon found he couldn't. At the end he stops boasting, and is good to young Ilyá, and gives him all his strength, so that makes up.

The hero who really can do everything is Volgá. He was a prince, not a peasant, and he was a mighty hunter, like Nimrod in the Bible; and he was a wizard, too, and could turn himself into a grey wolf. Some people said his father was a wolf, some said he was a serpent. The story says "damp earth was his cradle," and that sounds uncomfortable, but the Russians always call the earth "damp earth." They mean that the rain has rained on it, and that it is not hard and dry, but full of sap like the trees. Volgá learnt all his wisdom from the beasts and birds. St. Francis used to preach to the birds, but Volgá let

PREFACE.

the beasts and birds preach to him, and that is better,
for the Bible says:

Ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee;

And the fowls of the air and they shall tell thee.

The first story is about Volgá, and in the first
picture you see him listening to a wise old Bear.

JANE ELLEN HARRISON.

This book is for children, and is no place for bibliography, but we should like to own our debt to three books. Chudinov's *Byliny* in the "Russian School Library" was our first introduction (in Russian) to the hero-tales; but for Rambaud's *La Russie Épique* it would have been difficult to put the stories together; and, last, to the kindness of Mr. E. T. Minns we are indebted for the loan of Hilferding's invaluable *Sbornik*, now out of print, and not easily obtainable during the War.

M. C. H.

J. E. H.

CONTENTS.

	Page
I. The Story of Volgá - - - - -	1
II. Mikúla the Villager's Son - - - - -	5
III. Svyatogór - - - - -	15
IV. Svyatogór and Ilyá of Múrom - - - - -	17
V. Ilyá of Múrom and Nightingale the Robber	30
VI. The Three Ways - - - - -	46
VII. Ilyá of Múrom and King Kálin - - - - -	50

CHARACTERS.

Volgá, Son of Svyátoslav.

Mikúla, the Ploughman Hero.

Svyatogór, the Hero.

Ilyá of Múrom, Son of Iván.

Vladimir, Prince of Kiev.

Apráxia, his Daughter.

Nightingale, the Robber.

King Kálin, a Tartar King.

Samson, a Hero (Ilyá's Godfather).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

	Page.
Volgá, Son of Buslav - - - - -	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Young Mikúla, the Villager's Son - - - -	11
Ilyá of Múrom, the Peasant's Son - - - -	19
Map of Ilyá's Journeys - - - - -	23
He Shot Nightingale the Robber - - - -	37
Ilyá came to Kiev Town - - - - -	41
A Feast of Honour was Spread - - - -	51
There was the Old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom -	57

* * * *These titles are literal translations of the Russian inscriptions on the illustrations.*

Hero Tales of Russia.

I.

THE STORY OF VOLGÁ.

THE red sun was going down behind the high hills, behind the blue sea. The countless stars showed themselves in the clear sky, and the bright moon was shining in the heavens when Volgá the Hero was born in Holy Russia. Damp Mother Earth was his cradle. The earth rocked, and there was a great storm upon the blue sea, and the fish went down into the deep sea, the birds flew up into the sky, the great aurochs and the deer fled over the hills, the hares and rabbits ran into the thick forest, and the wolves and bears fled away among the fir trees, sables and martens escaped to the islands, because they knew that a hero was born in Russia.

When Volgá was an hour and a half old he spoke with a voice like thunder, and said:

“Come then, O Lady, my mother, young Márfa, put no baby-clothes upon me, nor a sash of silk, but give me strong steel armour, and on my head put a helmet of gold. In my right hand a club, a club made heavy with lead of the weight of a hundred pounds.”

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

When Volgá was seven years old his mother had him taught to read, and she made him write with a pen. And from all the birds and beasts he learnt their skill and wisdom and the different tongues of all, and he understood the speech of all the beasts of the field and forest, and of all the birds and fishes.

When he was ten years old he learned much magic. First he learned to turn himself into a bright falcon, and next he learned to turn himself into a grey wolf, and the third thing he learned was to turn himself into a brown aurochs, a brown aurochs with golden hoofs.

When Volgá was seventeen he called his friends and companions together and formed a bodyguard of thirty youths save one, and Volgá himself was the thirtieth. He was their Chief, and took them with him on his journeys. He provided for them all and gave them abundance of food and drink, and of sugar sweet-meats many kinds. And warm clothes, too, he gave them, fur coats made of the skins of marten and sable and of panther. When his comrades slept Volgá slept not. Sometimes he turned himself into a grey wolf and ran and leaped in the dark forest and killed moose-deer and bears and wolves. Martens and panthers were his favourite prey, and he spared neither hares nor foxes. And at other times he turned himself into a bright falcon, flew far away over the blue sea and killed geese and white swans, and the little grey ducks he spared not.

One day when he was at Kiev he called his body-guard:

"My good brave comrades," said he, "listen to your big brother, your Chief. Bring a rope of silk and make a snare. Put it into the dark forest and set the snare upon the damp earth so as to catch beasts of the forest, and catch martens and foxes, black sables and other wild beasts, and go on snaring them for three days and three nights."

They listened to their big brother, their Chief, and they did the thing he had ordered. They took a rope of silk to the dark forest and set a snare upon the damp earth, but they could not catch a single beast. Then Volgá their Chief turned himself into a lion-beast. He leapt and bounded on the damp earth, through the dark forest, and drove out martens and foxes, black sables and other wild beasts, big bounding hares and little ermines. And Volgá took his own form again, and became a goodly youth.

And again when he was at the town of Kiev with his body-guard of brave youths he said:

"My good comrades, my brave lads, listen to your big brother your Chief. Take a snare of silk and set it in the dark forest at the very tops of the trees, and with it catch geese, swans and bright falcons, and little singing birds, and go on snaring them for three days and three nights."

And they listened to their big brother their Chief. They did the thing he ordered. They took a snare of silk, set the snare in the dark forest, at the very

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

tops of the trees, but they could not catch a single bird.

Volgá the Chief turned himself into an eagle. He flew up beneath the clouds and struck down geese, swans, bright hawks, and little singing birds.

Again when they were at the town of Kiev, Volgá the Chief said:

"Good comrades, my brave body-guard, listen to your big brother, your Chief. Take sharp axes, good for cutting wood, and build a ship of oak; take fishing nets of silk and go forth upon the blue sea, and fish for all kinds of fish—salmon and white fish, pike and dace, and the most precious fish—sturgeon, and go on fishing for three days and three nights."

They listened to their big brother their Chief, and they did the thing he ordered. They took sharp axes, good for cutting wood, and built a ship of oak. They took fishing nets of silk, but they could not catch a single fish.

Volgá the Chief turned himself into a big pike and swam in the blue sea. He sent up salmon and white sturgeon, pike and dace, and the costly fish—sturgeon, and drove them into the nets of his men.

And again, when he was at Kiev with his body-guard of good comrades, Volgá the Chief said:

"My good brave comrades, why should we not send to the country of the Tartars to find out what the Cham is thinking of? For the Cham may be thinking of something. And what if he were thinking of riding

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

into Holy Russia? Now, whom shall we send? If we send an old man he will go slowly, and we shall have long to wait. If we send a middle-aged man he will tarry and drink by the way; and if we send a boy he will stop and play. It seems as if Volgá will have to go himself!"

Then Volgá the Chief turned himself into a little bird and flew up beneath the clouds. He flew on and soon came to the country of the Tartars. He came to the house of the Tartar Cham and perched at the Cham's own window and listened to his secret talk.

The Cham said to his wife:

"Now I tell you, my Queen, I know what I know. In Russia the grass grows not as it used to grow. The flowers bloom not as before. Volgá must be dead and gone."

The Queen said:

"Come now, Santal, Cham of Tartary, the grass grows in Russia just as before. The flowers bloom in Russia just as before. I dreamed in the night—in dreams one sees all things. It seemed that from the East, that dear country, a bird was flying—a small singing bird—and from the West—the old country—after the little bird there flew a black crow. They flew together over the open plain, and they were pecking at each other, and the little singing bird was pecking the black crow, and she pulled out his feathers, and all were carried away on the wind."

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

And the Cham Santal of Tartary answered her: "Oh, my Queen! I am thinking of riding soon to Holy Russia with my army, and I shall take nine cities and give them to my nine sons, and for myself I shall bring back a costly fur coat."

But the Queen said:

"You will not take nine cities or give them to your nine sons, and you will not bring back for yourself a costly fur coat!"

The Cham of Tartary answered in a rage:

"Oh, you old devil! You were dreaming and saw yourself in your dream!"

And he struck her on her white face, and again he struck her on the other cheek. He threw the Queen down upon the brick floor, and threw her down a second time, and said:

"I shall ride to Holy Russia; I shall take nine cities, and give them to my nine sons; and for myself I shall bring back a costly fur coat."

Volgá the Chief flew down from the window-ledge to the ground and turned himself into a grey wolf and jumped into the stable yard. He picked out all the good horses and tore out the throat of every one.

Then Volgá turned himself into a little ermine and slipped into the armoury, where the Cham kept a great stock of weapons for his men. Volgá broke all the tough bows, tore out the silken bow strings, destroyed the sharp arrows, bit notches in the sharp swords, and bent the steel maces into a bow. Then he turned

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

himself again into a little bird and soon flew back to Kiev town, where he turned himself back into his own shape, and was once more a goodly youth.

Volgá came to his body-guard of good comrades.

“My brave comrades,” said he, “let us go to the land of the Tartars!”

And they went to the land of the Tartars, and they took all the Tartar army prisoners.

II.

MIKÚLA THE VILLAGER'S SON.

NEXT we come to the story of Mikúla, the villager's son, and how he meets with Volgá and joins his band of heroes. Young Volgá had an uncle who was a prince in the land, and the prince gave Volgá for his own three towns, and the towns were to pay him a yearly tribute, and so he set out with his body-guard of brave youths to collect this tribute.

Volgá set out, and as he rode through the free and open plain he heard a ploughman in the open field. The ploughman's plough could be heard scraping over the ground and scrunching over the stones, but the ploughman and his plough were out of sight on the boundless plain. Volgá rode towards the ploughman all day from morning till evening with his brave body-guard, but he could not come up with the ploughman. And Volgá rode on the whole of another day, another day from morning till evening, but he could not come up with the ploughman. The ploughman was ploughing the field and still drove on. The ploughman's plough scraped on and the ploughshare creaked over the stones, but still Volgá could not come within sight of him, and on the third day Volgá and his comrades

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

rode from morning till midday, and at midday they came up with the ploughman in the open field. The ploughman was ploughing in the field, and on he drove. From edge to edge he swept the long furrows. When he reached the edge of the field he could not see the other edge. He cast out the stumps and stones, and all the large stones he piled up in a trench.

The ploughman had a light bay mare, and the stock of his plough was of maple wood. His mare was harnessed with ropes of silk.

When Volgá came up with the ploughman he spoke to him and said:

"God help thee, good ploughman, to plough the field and till the ground, and to do thy labour, to sweep the furrows from edge to edge of the field, and to turn out the stumps and stones from the ground."

The ploughman looked at Volgá and said:

"Here comes Volgá with his brave body-guard! Yes, I need the help of God to do my peasant's work! Is it far thou goest, Volgá, and whither dost thou go with thy brave body-guard?"

"Well, good ploughman, I am going to town to collect the tribute. First I go to Gurchevitz town, and next I am going to Orechovitz, and then to a third town, Krestyanovitz."

"Well, my Lord Volgá," said the ploughman, "I was in town not long since on my bay mare, and I brought away with me from the town two bags of

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

salt, only two bags of salt, each of fourteen hundred pounds weight, and the peasants there are all thieves; they asked me for threepence for toll. But I had my whip for the journey, and I paid them their toll with my whip."

"Now come with me, good ploughman," said Volgá, "come and join my body-guard!"

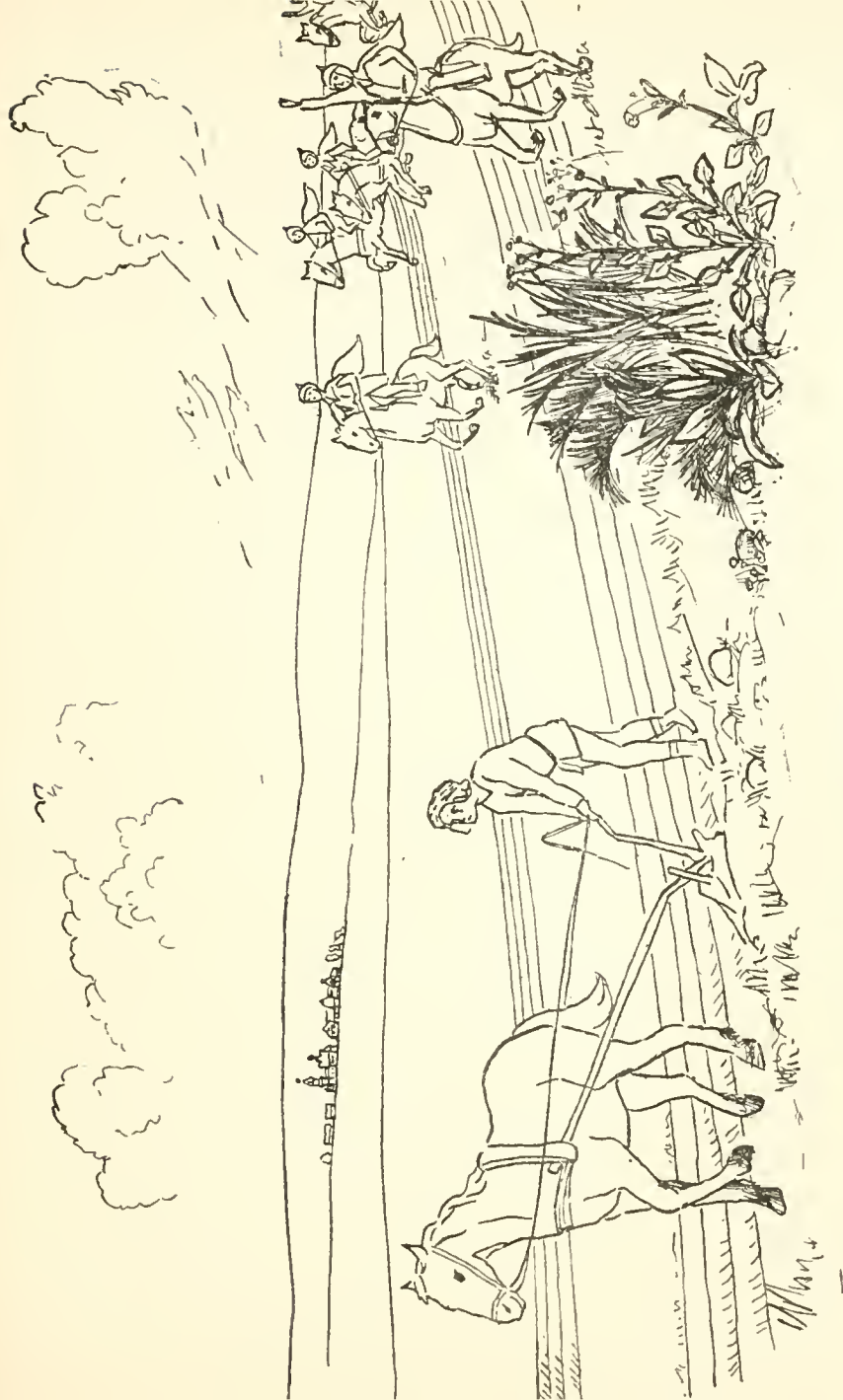
And the good ploughman straightway unfastened his ropes of silk, took his mare from the plough, and got on her back.

Volgá's body-guard were all mounted on their good horses and were setting off, but the ploughman stopped Volgá and said:

"Now, Volgá, I left the plough in the furrow; would it not be better to pull the plough out of the ground and shake the earth from the ploughshare, and throw the plough behind the broom bush? Not for fear of any passing travellers who might take it, but on account of the good-for-nothings in the village who might meddle with my plough."

Young Volgá ordered five strong young men out of his brave body-guard to pull the plough out of the ground, to shake the earth from the ploughshare, and throw the plough behind the broom bush. The five strong young men rode up to the plough of maple wood, they turned the plough about by the shaft, but could not pull the plough out of the ground, or shake the earth from the ploughshare, and throw the plough behind the broom bush.

Young Volgá then sent from his brave body-guard a whole half-score to pull the plough out of the ground,



Молодон Микұла Селанинович.

to shake the earth from the ploughshare, and throw the plough behind the broom bush. They turned the plough round by the shaft, but could not pull the plough out of the ground, or shake the earth from the ploughshare, or throw the plough behind the broom bush.

Young Volgá then sent his whole brave body-guard to pull the plough out of the ground, shake the earth from the ploughshare, and throw the plough behind the broom bush, but, though they tried their hardest, they could not pull the plough out of the ground, or shake the earth from the ploughshare, and throw the plough behind the broom bush. Then the good ploughman came riding up upon his light bay mare to this plough of maple wood. He took hold of the plough with one hand, pulled the plough out of the ground, shook the earth from the ploughshare, and threw the plough into the broom bush.

Again they all mounted their good steeds and rode on. The ploughman's mare went on at a trot, but Volgá's horse had to gallop to try to get up to the ploughman's mare, and Volgá's horse was left behind. Volgá began to wave his cap, and he shouted:

"Stop, good ploughman. If that mare of yours were a horse, I would give five hundred for that mare."

The ploughman answered him:

"Stupid is Volgá, the son of Svyátoslav. I took the mare as a foal from the dam, and I paid five hundred for that mare when she was a foal. If the mare were a horse, she would be priceless!"

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

Said Volgá, the son of Svyátoslav :

“Here, good ploughman-farmer, by what name art thou called? What is thy father's name, and whence comest thou?”

And the ploughman answered him:

“Well now, Volgá, son of Svyátoslav, I plough the fields for rye, I build my ricks, I stack my corn, I lead it home; when I've brought it home, I grind the corn, I split wood, and I brew beer. When I have brewed beer I give it to the peasants to drink. And the peasants call me Young Mikúla, the villager's son!”

III.

SVYATOGÓR.

THERE was once a great Russian Hero who was so big and strong that no one could stand up against him, and he fancied that with his great strength he could do anything.

One day he made up his mind to go out for a ride on the plain, the great open plain in Russia, where one can ride for miles without seeing anything but the long waving feather grass.

He saddled and bridled his good horse, got upon his back and rode out on the open plain. In his heart he was glad; yes, he was glad—yes, and overflowing with strength, and he said to himself:

“So strong do I feel that if I could find something to take hold of I could lift up the whole world!”

He rode on a long way and presently saw another man on horseback ahead of him. The man did not look round, but he let fall a small wallet such as a man often carries across his shoulder or across his horse. Svyatogór saw it lying on the road and tried to push it away with the end of his whip; it did not move. He bent over and touched the wallet with his fingers, but he could not move it. He stooped down from his

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

horse and grasped the wallet with his hand, but he could not lift it.

"Many years have I journeyed upon this earth," said he, "but never have I come upon so strange a thing. Such a wonder have I never seen. A little wallet, a bag, that will not be pushed away, that cannot be moved out of the way, and that cannot be lifted up!"

The hero got off his good horse, stooped and grasped the bag with both hands; he lifted it a little higher than his knees, but he sank down into the earth as far as his knees, and, not tears, but blood, ran down his white face, and as he sank down he could not rise again.

The man who was riding in front turned round and rode back to him.

Svyatogór asked:

"What was in that wallet to make it so heavy?"

The man answered:

"The weight of the whole world."

"Who art thou?" asked Svyatogór.

"I am Mikúla, the villager's son."

IV.

SVYATOGÓR AND ILYÁ OF MÚROM.

NEAR the town of Múrom in Russia there lived long ago a farmer called Iván, with his wife and family. He and his wife and his sons and daughters worked hard in the fields, all but one son, Ilyá, who was always sitting at home. For thirty years Ilyá had been sitting at home because he could use neither hands nor feet.

One day he was sitting by the window as usual, when two wandering pilgrims came passing by. They were both too lame and old to work, but they had made the pilgrimage to the Holy Land and now walked about the country singing psalms and living upon the food and money that kind folk gave them. They saw Ilyá at his window and called out:

"Ilyá! Ilyá of Múrom, open wide the gate for the pilgrims; let us into thy house."

Ilyá of Múrom answered:

"Well now, good pilgrims, I cannot open the gate, for I have been sitting here these thirty years. I can use neither hands nor feet."

Again the pilgrims called to him:

"O Ilyá, rise up upon thy nimble feet. Open wide the gates and let the pilgrims in to visit thee in thy house."

Ilyá stood up upon his feet, as though nothing ailed him. He opened wide the gates and let the pilgrims into the house. They came in, crossing themselves like good Russians, and bowed low when they were in the room.

"Pray give us a drink, Ilyá," they said.

Ilyá brought them a large bowl of honey drink; it held about a pailful and a half, and he offered it to the pilgrims. They took it and drank, and then offered it to Ilyá. He drank the bowlful and felt a rush of warmth throughout his body, his hero's heart burned within him.

"What dost thou feel, O Ilyá?" asked the pilgrims.

Ilyá bowed to the ground before the pilgrims and answered:

"I feel great strength within me."

"Bring another drink, Ilyá," said the pilgrims.

And Ilyá brought another cupful, and offered it to the pilgrims. They offered it to Ilyá, and Ilyá emptied the cup without drawing breath.

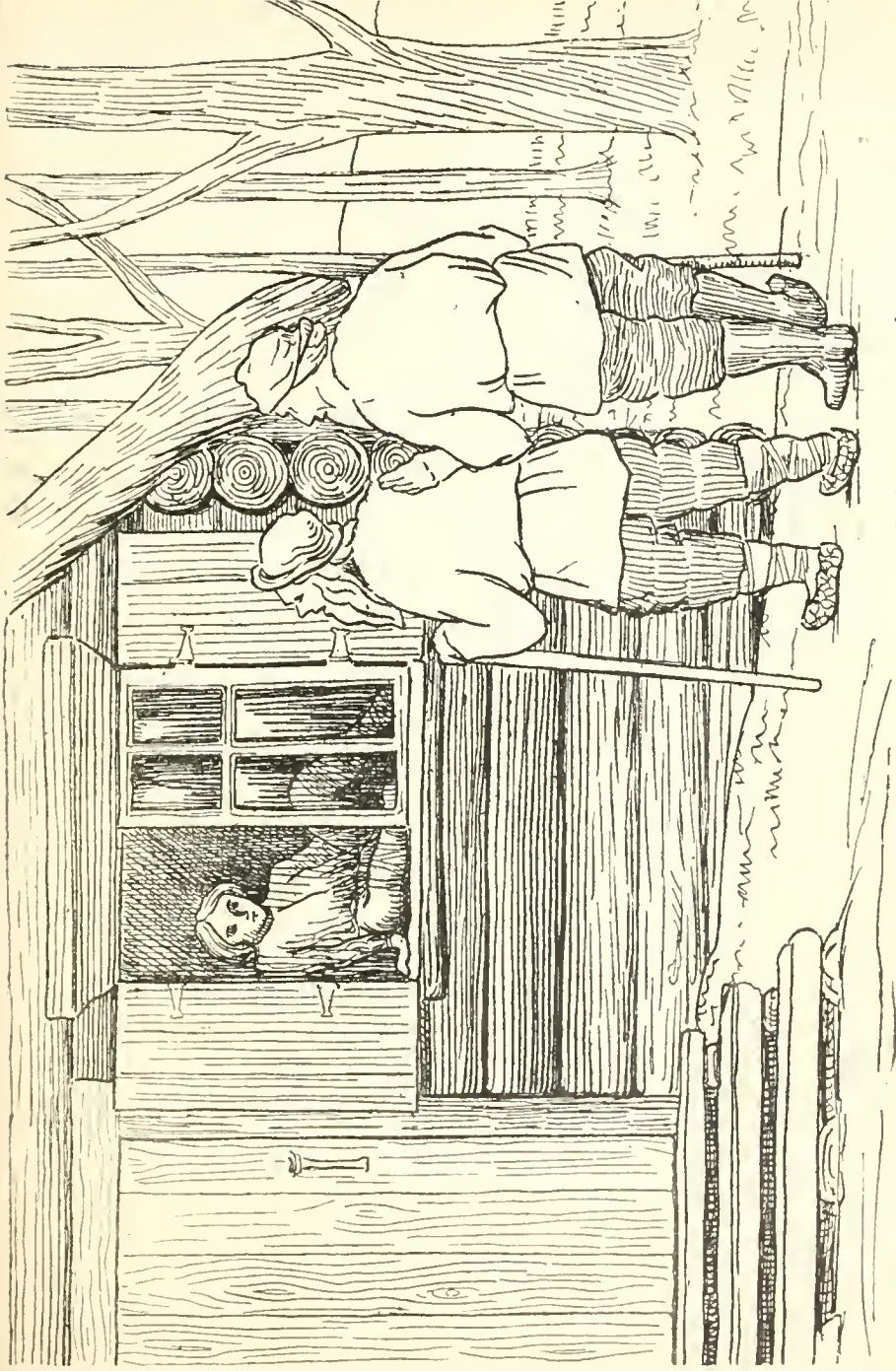
"How dost thou feel now, Ilyá?" asked the pilgrims.

"I feel great strength, but only half as much as before," answered he.

Then the wandering pilgrims said:

"O Ilyá, thou wilt be a great hero, and it is not written that thou shouldst die in battle. Fight thou with all the heroes and the bold warrior women of the plain, and defend thyself against them; only go not out to fight with the hero Svyatogór, for with his

НАБА МХРМЕЦЪ
КРЕСТЬАНСКИ СЫНЪ.



HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

strength he could carry the earth; and fight not with the hero Samson, for he has upon his head seven hairs of angels; also fight not with the race of Mikúla, for damp Mother Earth loves him. Neither go after Volgá, son of Svyátoslav; he will overcome thee, not by force, but by craft and wisdom. Now rise up, O Ilyá, mount thy horse, and ride out into the free and open plain. Buy the first foal thou seest with its dam, and in three months' time thou mayst put on the saddle. Feed him on millet and maize; walk him about for three months, then keep him for three nights in the garden, and roll the foal three mornings in the dew. Lead him to a high fence, and when he will readily leap the fence both from this side and the other, then ride him where thou wilt, he will carry thee."

Then the pilgrims vanished, and presently Ilyá's father and mother came in from their work in the fields. His brother and sisters came in also from their work, and his father and mother were glad indeed to see that Ilyá could walk as if nothing had ever ailed him. Then from joy they became sad again, and said:

"Thirty years has Ilyá been sitting on the bench as if he had neither hands nor feet!"

And Ilyá said to his father:

"Where have you been working to-day, father?"

But his parents only said:

"Glory to Thee, O Lord! Thirty years has Ilyá been sitting by the stove, and was he not without hands or feet?"

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

And Ilyá asked again:

"But you, father and mother, where have you been working on the farm?"

"Well, Ilyá," answered his father, "we are working in the field by the stream; we are clearing it for ploughing. It is the field three fields from home."

After they had dined Ilyá said to his parents:

"Now, dear father and mother, take me to the water meadow. Show me my bit of work."

And his parents took him down to the water meadow, and Ilyá said:

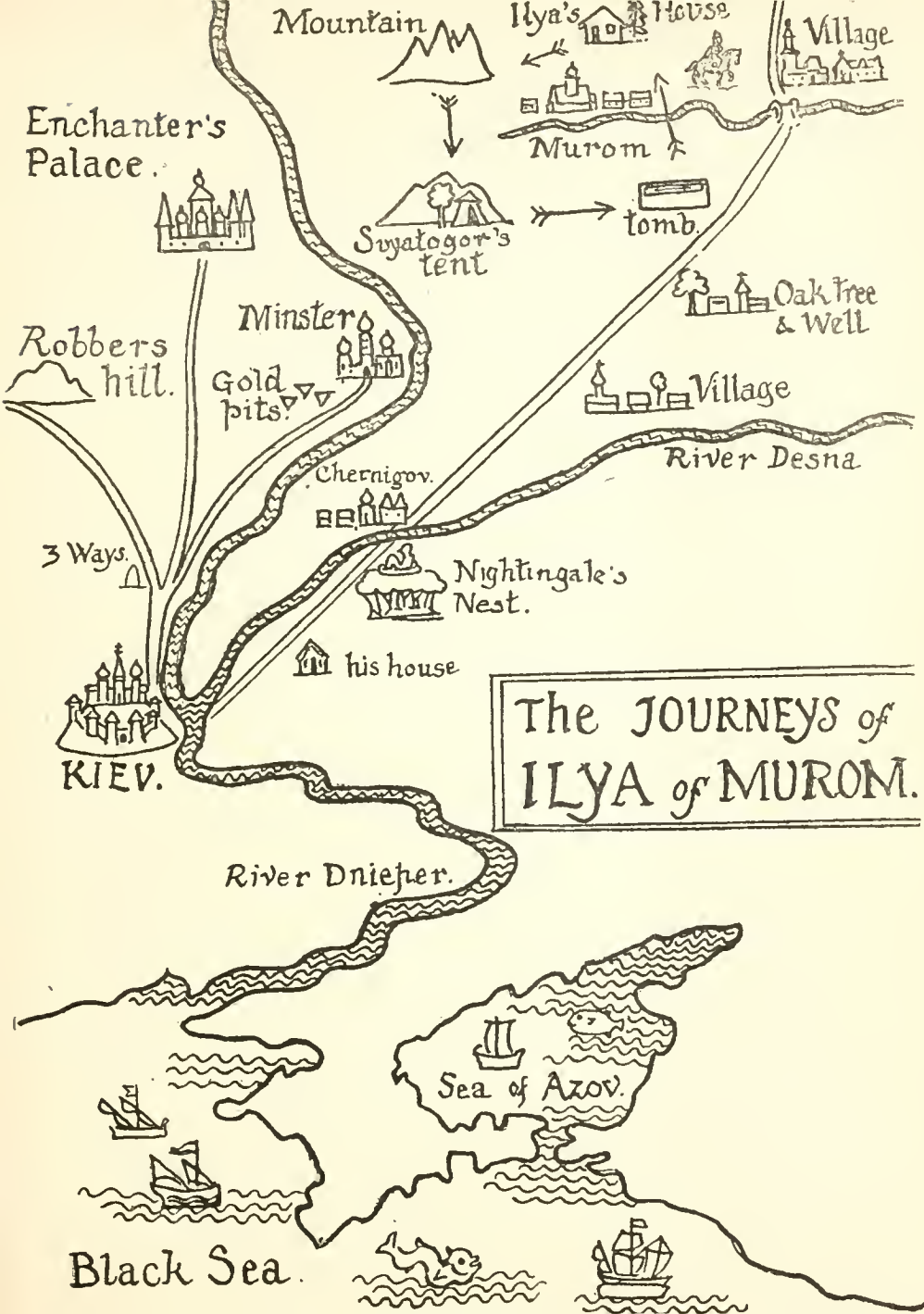
"Show me how far you will plough here," and they showed him the boundary and sat down to rest.

But Ilyá seized the brushwood by handfuls and cut it down by the roots and threw it all on to a pile on the edge of the field. And he worked so hard and so fast that the field was cleared in a quarter of the time that it would have taken his father to finish the work. The father and mother were asleep, for they were tired by the long morning's work, but they awoke when Ilyá came towards them, saying:

"Come, father and mother, is not your field well cleared for the ploughing? Now I must say good-bye to home!"

Then Ilyá saddled his good horse and put on the bridle, and his father and mother gave him their farewell blessing.

He rode away through the open plain till at last



HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

he came to a high mountain. When he reached the high mountain he climbed up it and then lay down to rest, and he slept for twelve days the sleep of a hero. When he awoke he saw at a distance a white tent standing beneath a tree. He mounted his horse again and rode a long way through the plain towards the white tent. This tent stood beneath the shade of a great green oak tree upon another hill. In the tent was a great bed seventy feet long and forty-two feet wide. Ilyá tied up his horse to the oak tree and lay down upon that hero's bed, and went to sleep. Now the sleep of a hero is sound, and Ilyá slept for three days and three nights.

On the third day his good horse heard a terrible noise from the north. Mother Earth rocked, the dark forest shook, the rivers overflowed their steep banks. Ilyá's good horse struck the ground with his hoofs, but could not waken Ilyá of Múrom. At last the horse spoke to him in a human voice:

"O Ilyá of Múrom! thou knowest not that danger is near thee. The hero Svyatogór is coming to his tent. Let me loose that I may flee across the open plain, and thou mayest climb up into the green oak tree."

Ilyá untied his horse's bridle and set the good horse free to gallop across the plain; and then he climbed up into the oak tree. From the oak tree he saw the hero Svyatogór coming on his great horse. The hero was taller than a standing forest, and his head nearly touched a moving cloud. On his shoulder he carried

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

a great chest of glass. He came down from his horse and placed the chest on the ground and opened it with a golden key. Out of the chest came the hero's wife. So lovely was she that no such beauty had ever been seen or heard of in the whole white world.

Very tall she was and elegant, and delicately did she walk. She had eyes like the eyes of a bright falcon, eyebrows of black sable, and waving black hair. As soon as she came out of the great chest she set to work to lay the table for her husband's dinner. She spread a bright chequered table-cloth and took from the chest a bottle of honey drink and a cup and sweetmeats full many, and placed them upon the chequered cloth.

After he had eaten and drunk, Svyatogór lay down to sleep on his great bed in the tent, but his wife went to walk on the open plain. She caught sight of Ilyá in the oak tree and would have him to come down and talk to her. When her husband suddenly woke up she put Ilyá into her husband's pocket to hide him. Svyatogór stood up and put his wife back into the glass chest and lifted it on to his shoulder again. He called up his horse and got upon his back and set off to ride, but soon the horse stumbled, and Svyatogór was vexed and asked why he was stumbling.

"This morning," said the horse in a human voice, "I was carrying a hero and a hero's wife, but now I am carrying two heroes as well as the hero's wife."

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

Svyatogór looked round and saw no one, but putting his hand into his pocket there he found Ilyá. The hero asked Ilyá whence he came. Ilyá told him the truth, and Svyatogór was exceedingly angry and killed his wife for trying to deceive him.

That Ilyá had dealt straightly pleased the hero Svyatogór, and there arose a great friendship between them. Svyatogór exchanged crosses with Ilyá in token of friendship, and called Ilyá his younger brother. He taught Ilyá all the handling of weapons, how to use his mace and his bow and arrows and spear in fighting, and also all the ways of travel of the heroes. Ilyá had called up his good horse from the plain by a loud whistle, and the two heroes, the old Svyatogór and the younger Ilyá of Múrom, rode on together through the open plain till they came to a great tomb built of stone. Upon the tomb was written these words:—

“He who is fated to lie in this tomb will exactly fit it.”

Ilyá lay down in the tomb, but it was too long and too wide for him, and at once he sprang out of it.

The giant hero Svyatogór lay down there, and the tomb just fitted him.

“The tomb is just made for me,” said the hero. “Take the lid of the tomb, Ilyá, and cover me.”

Ilyá answered:

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

"I will not take up the lid of the tomb, O, my big brother. I will not cover thee. This is a foolish jest of thine—thou wilt bury thyself."

And Svyatogór took the lid and covered himself up in the tomb, but when he tried to lift the lid off again he could not move it. He struggled and strove to lift it, but could do nothing. Then he called to Ilyá:

"O, my young brother! It seems that my fate has found me. I cannot raise the lid. Try thou to lift it."

Ilyá of Múrom tried hard to raise the cover, but what could he do?

Then said Svyatogór the hero:

"Take my sword of steel and strike across the lid of the tomb."

Ilyá tried to lift Svyatogór's great sword, but could not—it was too heavy for him—and he had to say:

"I cannot lift thy sword, O, my brother!"

Svyatogór then called to him:

"My little brother, bend down to this small chink in the tomb, and I will breathe upon thee the spirit of a hero."

Ilyá bent down to the chink and Svyatogór the hero breathed upon him his hero's spirit. Ilyá felt that his former strength had become three times as great as before. He took the sword of steel and struck a blow across the lid of the tomb. By this blow sparks were struck, but on the place where he struck the lid there grew a band of iron.

The hero Svyatogór called to him again, saying:

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

"My young brother, I am suffocating; try again to strike the lid lengthwise."

Ilyá struck the cover lengthwise with the great sword, but again where he struck there grew a band of iron.

Then the hero Svyatogór spoke to him, saying:

"My young brother, I am suffocating. Stoop down to the chink and I will breathe upon thee and will give thee all my great strength."

But Ilyá answered:

"If I had all thy strength, O, my big brother, Earth would not bear me."

Then said the hero Svyatogór:

"Thou hast done well, little brother, in that thou didst not do my last bidding. I should have breathed upon thee with the breath of the dead, and thou wouldst have lain dead by me. Now, farewell; take my sword of steel, but lead my good horse to my tomb; none but I must own that horse."

Then came from the chink the last breath of the hero. Ilyá said farewell to his friend, girded on his sword of steel, but left the hero's horse by his master's tomb, and he rode away into the free and open plain.

V.

ILYA OF MÚROM AND NIGHTINGALE
THE ROBBER.

The green oak bows not down to the earth,
Leaves of paper do not grow.

ILYÁ had made up his mind to go to Kiev town to seek service with the gracious Prince Vladímir, but before setting out on that long journey he wished to see his father again and ask for his blessing, so he rode back to Múrom and to his old home. He found his old father there and greeted him, saying :

“Come thou, my own dear Father! I am here to ask for thy blessing. I go to glorious, royal Kiev town to pray at the sanctuary of Kiev and to pledge myself to Vladímir the Prince, to serve him in faith and in truth, and to uphold the Christian faith.”

The old farmer Iván blessed Ilyá and said :

“I give thee my blessing for the good work, but for evil work no blessing I give. Go thou on the right road, and do no harm to any woman whether she be Christian or Tartar.”

Ilyá of Múrom bowed to the earth before his father, and said farewell to his mother and his sisters and brothers, and then he mounted his good horse and rode

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

through the open plain. With his whip he struck his horse on the curved hind quarter and his restive steed was wroth and suddenly sprang from the earth and bounded higher than an upright tree, almost as high as a moving cloud. At the first bound he passed twelve miles, at the second bound he came to a well. By the well Ilyá cut down a green oak tree, and beside the well he built a small chapel, and upon the chapel he wrote his name,

ILYÁ OF MÚROM, SON OF IVÁN,

so that if some strong and mighty hero should ride that way, he should know the name of the builder of that chapel.

At the third bound Ilyá's horse brought him to the town of Chérnigov. Near Chérnigov there stood a countless host of Tartars, and at their head were three Princes, each with the strength of forty thousand. On seeing this vast horde the hero's heart grew hot within him, and he could not control his longing to fight. His heart was filled with fires, and it burned too as if scorched by frost. Then he spoke and said :

"I desire not to go against my father's wish, or knowingly to disregard his command."

Then he took in his hand his battle-sword and taught it to take a walk through the army. Where he turned, it opened out a street, and when he turned round there was a great open space. Ilyá made his way to the three princes, and spoke thus to them :

"Come, my three king's sons! Shall I take you away as prisoners, or shall I cut off your warlike heads? If I take you away as prisoners, I must travel over roads that I know not and must carry bread, but if I take off your heads the kingly race will be destroyed. If you will go home to your own country, you will spread such report of me that it will be known all over Russia, and you will tell it everywhere that in Holy Russia there are strong and mighty heroes."

The Governor of Chérnigov saw Ilyá and said:

"This Lord has vanquished our tyrant and cleansed our glorious city of Chérnigov," and he spoke to his princes and nobles and said:

"Go ye and call in this goodly hero to eat bread and salt with me."

And the princes and nobles came forth to greet Ilyá of Múrom and said:

"Come now, thou stalwart and goodly hero, and tell us by what honoured name thou art called, and what is thy renowned father's name?"

"They call me by the name of Ilyá, but I am honoured as the son of Iván," said Ilyá.

"Come, Ilyá of Múrom," said the princes and nobles, "come to our Governor, he sends us to invite thee to eat bread and salt with him."

But Ilyá wished to be on the way to Kiev and answered with little ceremony:

"I will not come to your Governor; I wish not to eat bread and salt with him. Show me the straight road to glorious, royal Kiev town."

So they had to let him go on his way, and they showed him the straight road to Kiev across the open plain.

Farther, farther upon on the open plain waves the feather grass in the breeze, and there upon the open plain, among old folk, mothers and men, rode the Old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom, and the horse he rode was like a fierce wild beast and he himself like a bright falcon.

Now the old hero carried no money, only seven thousand golden ducats had he with him, and of small money, forty thousand pieces. And the horse the hero rode was priceless. Why was the hero's horse priceless? Because these was no price for the horse.

When he came to a river he looked for no ford. Now the river was a full mile wide, but the good steed leapt from bank to bank. Then Ilyá saw a village near by and the villagers—brigands, as we say in our Russian tongue—rode out after the hero. They swept round him and tried to rob him, tried to part him from his life and soul.

Then said Ilyá of Múrom, son of Iván:

“Oh come, brother villagers, no reason have ye to kill an old man like me. And ye shall take nothing from the old man.”

He took from his saddle his tough bow and brought out from his quiver a sharp arrow. He bent his bow and fitted the arrow to the silken string, and

shot—not at the village folk—brigands though they were—for he would have been loth to slay them, but he shot at the green oak tree; and the bow-string sang in the tough bow, the villagers fell from their horses, the arrow struck the crackling green oak tree and shattered the oak into chips and shavings. By this heroic deed of thunder the brigand villagers were filled with fear, and for five hours they lay without sense, and Ilyá made sport of them.

“Come, come, good youths, you village brigands! Why do you lie half the night there upon the damp earth? Why go off to sleep and sleep half the night? On my way here I passed many people both on horseback and on foot; you have let many a good chance escape you.”

The goodly youths stood up upon their nimble feet and threw themselves at Ilyá’s feet and said:

“O thou brave hero! come and join our band and be thou our chieftain.”

The good hero, Ilyá of Múrom, answered them:

“I desire not to join your band; I am on my way to Kiev town, to Vladímir the Prince, to help him, and to fight and defend him.”

The bold hero rode on through the open plain till he came to a pillar of white oak. On the pillar this writing was written:

“To ride straight on—only five hundred miles,
But making a round—seven hundred miles.”

Ilyá looked at this writing and said:

"If I ride straight, I shall cease to live; this way I can neither ride nor walk nor fly. Nightingale the Robber sits in his nest upon the seven oaks, and the robber-dog will seize me at the seventh mile."

Ilyá stood still to think what he should do.

"The straight horse-road is broken up, the little bridge of white hazel is broken down. It would be no honour to me, or glory to my knighthood to ride by that roundabout way. It is better, to ride by the straight road."

At once he got down from his good steed; with one hand he led his horse, while with the other he put planks across the stream for a bridge—that bridge of white hazel.

The straight road he mended, and he rode on till he came near the clump of seven oak trees upon which Nightingale the Robber had built his great nest.

Nightingale the Robber was sitting upon his nest of twisted boughs upon the seven oak trees, and Ilyá rode up to the oak trees. The robber-dog tried to seize him just as he had come to the seventh mile, and Nightingale the Robber roared like a wild aurochs, and the villain whistled like a nightingale, and the robber-dog howled like a dog.

And at these sounds Ilyá's good steed fell upon his knees with terror at the roar of the aurochs,

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

and the whistle of the nightingale, and the dog-like howling of the robber-dog. Ilyá struck his horse between the ears and also struck him upon the flank, saying:

“Oh thou food for wolves, thou grass-bag! Hast thou never heard the roar of an aurochs? and hast thou never heard the whistle of a nightingale, and the howling of a robber-dog?”

The hero did not sit still but quickly bent his strong bow, took a sharp arrow from his quiver and shot the arrow at Nightingale the Robber as he sat there in his nest on the seven oak trees. The arrow hit Nightingale the Robber in the right eye and came out at the left ear, and Nightingale the Robber fell from his nest down upon the damp earth.

Then Ilyá took Nightingale the Robber and tied him to his Circassian stirrup and made him walk beside the horse towards Kiev town. Presently they came to the house of Nightingale the Robber. It was a big house in a large yard, and round the yard was a high iron fence with spikes on the railings, and upon every spike was set the head of a hero; for Nightingale the Robber killed all that passed that way.

Nightingale's children caught sight of their father and called out:

“Look! father is bringing a man.”

And Nightingale's young wife looked from the window and said:



СТРѢЛИЛЪ ТО СОЛОВЬА РАЗВОЙНИКА.

"A strange man is carrying off your dear father."

And she called to some men who were idling about the yard and said:

"Will you not take him from this wanderer on the road? Is your dear father nothing to you? He has fallen into the power of this horseman. It would be better to take a cup full of red gold, and another of pure silver, and a third cup full of round pearls. Go now and offer them as a ransom. Speak to this horseman and persuade him. Coax him and talk him over so that he may release Nightingale."

And they rushed into the house, and Nightingale's wife took the keys and went down to the deep vaults where all Nightingale's treasure was stored, and they filled a cup full of red gold, and another with pure silver, and a third with round pearls, and they went out to Ilyá with flattering words and tried to coax him and talk him over, saying:

"O thou bold hero, good youth, give us back our dear father and we will give thee gold and silver!"

Ilyá received these messengers and talked to them thus:

"Look here, brothers, you who work for gain, I will not give you your dear father; he would only turn brigand again and rob the travellers passing this way."

And Ilyá rode on to Kiev town with Nightingale the Robber by his side, still tied to the stirrup so that

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

he could not run away. Ilyá hurried on, for he would fain be at Kiev in time for the service on Easter morning; but he could not get there in time. When he reached Kiev he rode into the wide courtyard of the Prince's palace. He tied up his good horse to the gold ring on a carven pillar, but did not take off either the saddle or the bridle, and he left Nightingale the Robber still tied to the stirrup.

Then Ilyá walked quickly through the new entrance, through the guard room and into the hall. There he crossed himself like a good Russian, and made his bow as he came into the hall. The steward of Vladímir the Prince he greeted, and asked him:

"Where is the Prince Vladímir of royal Kiev?"

"Prince Vladímir has gone to Mass," was the answer.

Ilyá sat down on the plain wooden bench to wait, and in a short time Prince Vladímir came in with his nobles and attendants from the Easter service.

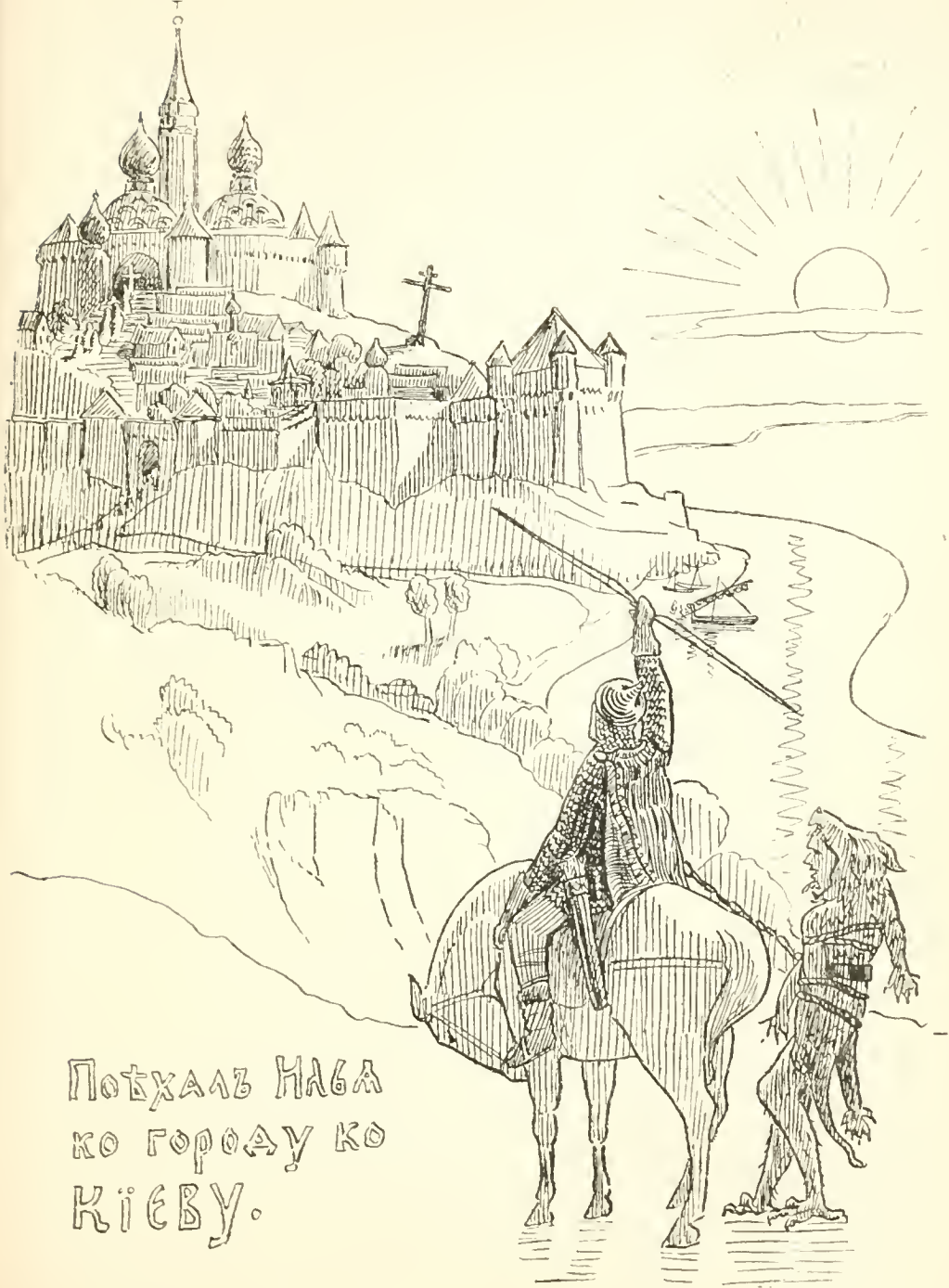
Then they all gave greetings one to the other, and each hero greeted the other, and Vladímir spoke to Ilyá and said:

"All hail to thee, brave youth, I know not thy name or thy father's name. Art thou a Tsar or a Tsar's son? Art thou a king or a king's son?"

Ilyá answered and said:

"I am from the town of Múrom. I am the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom."

And they all sat down at the table to eat bread,



Потхалъ нѣмѣ
ко городу ко
Кіеву.

and they carved and ate white swans, and Ilyá began to talk and to boast of what he had done.

"I am a brave hero, I have been riding through the eve of Easter Day. I would fain have been in time for the Easter Mass, but I could not get here in time for Easter morning, for the hour was past. I rode here by the straight road, and when I reached the green oaks, Nightingale the Robber was sitting upon the seven oaks. That ill-doer used to seize upon every one for seven miles round. When I came near the oaks Nightingale roared like a wild aurochs, and the villain whistled like a nightingale, and the robber-dog howled like a dog. Then my good horse fell upon his knees with fear, but I took out my tough bow, set the sharp arrow, and shot Nightingale the Robber. I shot the villain through the right eye, and the arrow came out by the left ear. Then Nightingale fell upon the damp earth, and I took the robber and fastened him to my Circassian stirrup and brought the villain with me."

Vladímir the Prince looked at Ilyá and said:

"It seems to me, my bold youth, that there must be a big tavern in this country! Hast thou been drinking strong drink? Art thou not making empty boasts, good hero?"

Ilyá's wrath grew hot within him, and angrily he said:

"Thou it is who art the fool, O Prince of royal Kiev! I have Nightingale the Robber here, tied to my Circassian stirrup."

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

Then all sprang up and rushed out, hurried and stumbled against each other as they ran out to see Nightingale the Robber. They all spoke and shouted together and called out to him :

“O thou Nightingale the Robber! Roar, O Nightingale, like an aurochs! Thou evil doer, whistle like a nightingale! O thou robber-dog, howl like a dog!”

Nightingale the Robber looked up and said :

“With you I neither eat nor drink, and I will not obey you.”

At once the crowd of courtiers turned back to the hall and came to Ilyá of Múrom, bowed low to him and craved their boon :

“O Ilyá of Múrom, we beg thee to make Nightingale the Robber roar like an aurochs, and make the villain whistle like a nightingale, and make the robber-dog howl like a dog.”

And Ilyá spoke to the Prince and said :

“O Vladímir, Prince of royal Kiev! Nightingale’s lips are now sealed together and his mouth is filled with dried blood, for my arrow went through his right eye and it came out by the left ear. Pray let a bowl of strong drink be poured out for him—a bowl weighing half a hundredweight, a bowl holding four gallons, and let it be given to Nightingale.”

And they poured him out a bowl of strong drink—a bowl weighing half a hundredweight, a bowl holding four gallons; and they took it to Nightingale the

Robber. He took the bowl in one hand, drank off the bowl of strong drink at one draught, and spoke these words:

"Pour out another bowl of strong beer—a bowl weighing half a hundredweight, a bowl holding four gallons, and pour out a third bowl of sweet mead—a bowl weighing half a hundredweight, a bowl holding four gallons."

And they poured out a bowlful of strong beer, and they poured out a bowlful of sweet mead and brought both to Nightingale the Robber. He took the bowl with one hand and drank off the bowlful at one draught. And then Nightingale the Robber was drunken, and Ilyá of Múrom said to him:

"Now, Nightingale! Roar, thou robber, like an aurochs; whistle, O villain, like a nightingale; and howl, O dog, like a dog."

And Nightingale the Robber roared like an aurochs the villain whistled like a nightingale, and the robber-dog howled like a dog.

Princes and nobles all lay for dead, but Vladímir the Prince of royal Kiev stood up straight and went up to Ilyá, for the Princee had a boon to ask:

"Silence Nightingale the Robber, lest he whistle again like a nightingale, and my nobles leave me here alone."

VI.

THE THREE WAYS.

ONE day Ilyá set off on his good horse for a ride. He rode a long way through the open plain till he came to the Burning Stone. Three lengths beyond the stone there were three paths leading this way and that from the Burning Stone, and upon the stone was written:

“Who goes by the first path will be killed.
Who goes by the second path will find marriage.
Who goes by the third path will become rich.”

He stopped to consider:

“By which path shall I go? Why should a bold hero want to be rich? Why should I want to marry? I will take the way to be killed.”

So he took that way and rode on for three hours, and he rode three hundred miles, and then he came to a hill, and at that hill, that high hill, brigands began to come up, and there came up forty thousand brigands. They began to defy our bold hero, and the brave Cossack spoke and hailed them:

“Come, you forty thousand robbers! What will you take from me, the bold hero? I have not many

chests of uncounted gold, I have no beautiful young wives, I have no fine clothes, I have nothing but a good horse, a good horse which cost three hundred; on the horse are trappings worth five hundred; on myself a hero's gear worth a cool thousand."

When he drew his iron mace of three tons weight, he began to defy the robbers, and he killed the forty thousand robbers.

Then the bold hero turned back, and when he reached the Burning Stone he altered the writing thus:

"If thou goest by this road thou wilt not be killed."

And he said:

"I shall go by the road to marriage."

So Ilyá took the second path and rode on for just three hundred miles. He rode on always through the plain, that open plain, through the open plain, the green meadow, through those open plains and through green meadows till he came to a wonderful and a strange thing. If we called it a town it would be too small; if we called it a village it would seem too large, but there stood a palace built of white stone. When Ilyá reached the broad palace yard there came a most beautiful young princess from the palace of white stone. She came to meet the brave hero and took him by his white hands, kissed him with her sweet lips,

led him into the white stone palace, and made him sit down at the oaken table, where a feast was spread. Ilyá ate and drank in plenty, and stuffed himself the whole day long till evening, when he rose up from the oaken table and spoke to the princess and said:

“O thou enchanting and beautiful lady, where are thy warm sleeping chambers? Where are the beds of carved wood? Where are the soft feather beds? I am an old man and weary, and I would fain sleep.”

And the princess led him to a warm chamber, but the old man stood by the bed and shook his head and said:

“Much have I travelled through Holy Russia, but so strange a thing have I never seen. It seems to me that that bed is a trap.”

Suddenly he seized the princess by her white hands and threw her against the brick wall against which the bed stood. The bed of carved wood turned over and the princess fell down into a deep dungeon below.

The old Cossack walked out of the palace, and outside he found the door of the deep dungeon. Then he took the golden keys, went on and unlocked the deep dungeon and set free many goodly youths and brave, and many strong and mighty heroes, but the beautiful and wicked enchantress was killed. And all the rich treasure which Ilyá found there in that white stone palace he bestowed on the good youths and brave, and on the strong and mighty heroes. But that white stone palace he gave to the flames.

And then our bold hero rode back again, and when he came to the Burning Stone he again altered the graven letters and wrote:

“By that way I went—I was not married.”

“I go,” said he, “by the third path, where one will become rich.”

And on he rode for three hours, three hundred miles he rode, and again he rode through the plain, the open plain, the meadow, the green meadow, to a place where there were sunk deep pits in the ground, all piled up with red gold—red gold, pure silver, and fine round pearls.

Ilyá looked at the gold and said:

“What has a bold hero to do with these riches, with this treasure of much uncounted gold?”

He began to consider: and then he took enough of this treasure in this plain, this open plain, to build an abbey for prayers to God. He built a church, a minster church, ordered the singing of psalms and the ringing of bells, and then Ilyá said:

“Let him whose treasure it was go and look for it!”

And then the bold hero turned back again; again he rode to that Burning Stone; again he wrote beneath that inscription:

“Though I rode by that path, I became not rich.”

VII.

ILYA OF MÚROM AND KING KÁLIN.

IN the palace of the gracious Prince Vladímir, in royal Kiev town, a great feast of honour was spread for many princes and nobles and for the strong and mighty heroes and their bold followers, men of the plains, and for the stranger merchants and traders.

The Fair Sun, Prince Vladímir himself, took his pleasure there, and gave rich gifts to his guests. To some he gave towns, and to others he gave small towns, to some he gave villages, and to others he gave hamlets, and to Ilyá of Múrom he gave a coat of marten fur with a collar of sable.

But Ilyá received not the fur coat as an honour; he received it without respect and praised it not. He took the fur coat into the kitchen and dragged the fur coat about the kitchen floor. Yes, and thus he talked to the fur coat:

“Just as I drag about this fur coat, so will I drag about that serpent, King Kálin, by his yellow curls. And just as I pour strong drink upon this fur coat, his heart shall pour forth his hot blood.”

And there was a dark-haired maid there, and she reported the matter to Fair Sun, Prince Vladímir, and said:



Да собранъ - то былъ
почестной пиръ.

"O Fair Sun, Prince Vladímir! When Ilyá of Múrom was in my kitchen, he dragged about the coat of marten fur; yes, and he said to the fur coat:

"Just as I drag this fur coat about, so will I drag Prince Vladímir about by his yellow curly hair, and, just as I pour strong drink upon the fur coat—yes, he himself said it to the fur coat—the Fair Sun, Prince Vladímir's hot blood shall be poured out by my white hands."

And the Fair Sun, Prince Vladímir, grew angry, and he cried out in a loud voice:

"Come, my strong and mighty heroes, take Ilyá away to the dungeon, and put an iron grating there and cover it over with logs of oak; yes, and bury him with yellow sand."

And the heroes came to Ilyá and said:

"Now, old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom! Fair Sun Vladímir, the Prince, has ordered us to put thee in a deep dungeon, and to put an iron grating there, and to cover it all over with oak logs, yes, and to bury thee with yellow sand."

And Ilyá spoke to them and said:

"Now, what will ye do with me?"

And the heroes said:

"There is no sun in the heavens. Not one hero in Holy Russia. Old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom! O that we might take thee out of this bitter captivity! Fair Sun, Prince Vladímir, makes us turn pale."

Then Ilyá mounted his good horse and rode to

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

Kiev town. He rode not into Kiev town, but he rode to the deep dungeon.

He got down from his good horse, took off the Circassian saddle, took off the braided bridle and let his brown horse go where God willed.

Then Ilyá was let down into the deep dungeon, and they put a grating over; they put it above him and placed oak logs all over it, and buried him with yellow sand.

Now the glorious Prince Vladímir had an only daughter, and she saw that this was no small matter that Prince Vladímir of royal Kiev town had put the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom, into that cold dungeon. For it might be that he alone would be able to defend the Faith and Country; that he alone might defend Kiev town; that he alone might defend the Minster Church, might protect Vladímir the Prince and the Princess Apráxia.

So the Princess caused a deep trench to be dug to reach the dungeon of the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom. And she commanded that false keys should be made; and she sent people secretly to take to the cold dungeon pillows of down and feather beds, and ordered them to take warm coverlets too, and changes of clothing, and to provide delicate food for the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom. But of this had Vladímir the Prince no knowledge.

Now that dog, the Tartar King Kálin, burned to

be at Kiev town. Even royal Kiev town would he destroy, and all the peasants he would cut to pieces, and would burn down the churches of God, and also cut off the heads of Vladimir the Prince and the Princess Apráxia.

And King Kálin, the dog, sent an envoy to royal Kiev town and gave him a letter to deliver, and he said to the envoy :

“When thou goest to royal Kiev town thou wilt be an ambassador in Kiev town to the glorious Prince Vladimir. Therefore go to the broad courtyard of the Prince’s palace, and dismount not, but ride in on thy good steed. After thou hast ridden through the courtyard, then get down off thy steed and go to the palace of white stone, and into the great hall of white stone and into the dining hall. Go not humbly, but walk in with a flourish through the five doors and take not thy cap from thy head ; but go up to the oaken table and stand opposite Prince Vladimir and place the letter upon the golden table before him, and speak to Prince Vladimir and say :

“O Prince Vladimir of royal Kiev town ! Take this letter which is sent to thee, and look at what is written in the letter and see what is impressed upon it. Clean all thy arrow-straight streets and the Courts of the Prince in all the town of Kiev, and in all the broad streets and alleys of the principedom place sweet strong drinks, cask by cask standing close together, for those who stand by the dog, King Kálin, with his mighty warriors, in thy town of Kiev.”

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

Prince Vladímir of royal Kiev took the letter sent to him, broke the seal and looked at what was written therein, and he saw what was in the letter: that he was commanded to clean the arrow-straight streets and the great Courts of the Prince, and to place sweet strong drinks in all the broad streets and all the alleys of the principedom.

Then Vladímir, the Prince of royal Kiev, saw that this was no small matter, but a great one, and he sat down in his writing-chair and a humble letter wrote he.

“Thou dog, King Kálin! Give me the space of three years, give me three years and three months, three months and also three days, that I may clean the arrow-straight streets and the great Courts of the Prince, and make sweet strong drinks and place them in the town of Kiev and in all the broad streets and in in all the alleys of the glorious principedom.”

The Prince sent off this humble letter to that dog, King Kálin. And the dog, King Kálin gave him the space of three years, three years and three months, three months and three days. And day after day the rain it rained, and week after week it ran like a river, and the time went by—the three years and three months and three days; and then came the dog, King Kálin. Came beneath the town of Kiev with his great army.

Then Prince Vladímir of royal Kiev began to walk up and down, and tears of grief flowed from his bright

ДА
ТАМЪ
СТАРЫН
КАЗАКЪ
ДА
НАБА
МЪРО-
-МЕЦЪ.



eyes. With a kerchief of silk the Prince wiped his eyes, and he spoke these words:

"The old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom, lives no longer, none is there to defend the Faith and Country; none to defend the Church of God and Kiev town; none to protect Vladímir the Prince and the Princess Apraxia!"

Then came to him his dear daughter, and spoke to him these words:

"O my dear father, Prince Vladímir of royal Kiev, the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom, is yet alive, he is alive in the cold dungeon."

Then Prince Vladímir quickly brought the golden keys and went to the cold dungeon, and soon unlocked the doors and opened the iron grating. And there was the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom, sitting there in the dungeon, reading the Holy Gospels.

And there were down pillows and feather beds, and warm coverlets had been brought there, and changes of apparel and delicate food provided.

And the Prince took Ilyá by his white hands and by his golden ring, and led him from the cold dungeon, brought him to his white stone palace, and placed him near himself. He kissed Ilyá and welcomed him, and invited him to the oaken table, and gave him sugar sweetmeats to eat and drink made from honey. Then spoke the Prince to Ilyá these words:

"Old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom! Taken is our town of Kiev. The dog, King Kálin, has surrounded Kiev

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

town with his great army. Do thou defend our Faith and Country and glorious Kiev town, and defend the Church of the Mother of God, and Vladímir thy Prince and the Princess Apráxia."

Then the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom, went out from the palace of white stone, and walked through the town of Kiev to his dwelling of white stone. He asked for his beloved steed, and went to the broad yard and into the stable, and looked at his good war horse. And Ilyá said:

"My beloved steed! My trusty and unchanging servant! Well hast thou been looked to, my hero horse."

He kissed him on his sweet mouth, led the good horse from the stable stall and into the fine broad courtyard; and then the old Cossack began to saddle his good horse there. Upon the horse he put a saddle-cloth, and upon the saddle-cloth he laid a cloth of felt; now the saddle-cloth was of silk, and upon the saddle-cloth he laid another cloth, and then the Circassian saddle. But the Circassian saddle did not hold firmly, and Ilyá fastened it by twelve girths of silk, and he drew them up with steel pins. And he fixed on stirrups of steel and buckles of red gold—not for show, but for heroic strength. Drawn up are the girths of silk, and they break not; steel and iron bend, but break not; and the buckles of red gold may get wet, but they rust not.

Ilyá then got upon his good steed, and took with

him his hero's weapons. His club of steel took he, and his grooved spear, his sharp sabre also, and his whip for the journey. And Ilyá set out from the town of Kiev and rode through the open plain, and up to the Tartar army. And when he came near and saw that great host, and heard the shouting of the men and the neighing of the horses, he began to lose heart. And when the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom rode through the free and open plain, he could not find out where the army ended. He leapt up a high hill, looked round on all sides and looked down upon the Tartar army; he could see no end or limit to it.

He came down from that high hill and rode on through the free and open plain, and he leapt up another high hill and looked towards the western side and saw some white tents standing, and by the tents stood heroes' horses. He hastened down from that high hill and rode through the freedom of the open plain, and he came to the white tents. And when Ilyá got down from his good horse near the white tents, there stood the heroes' horses. They were standing by a white linen cloth, and on the cloth millet and spring corn were scattered.

Ilyá let the silken bridle hang loose on the neck of his good hero horse and urged on his horse to the white linen, saying:

"Pleasant indeed would it be to taste it, if the heroes' horses will allow him upon the white linen cloth to share the millet and spring corn."

His good horse stood by the linen cloth and began to eat the millet and spring corn, and the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom went to the white tent. In the tent were twelve heroes, and the heroes were all Russian, and they sat there eating bread and salt, and they were about to dine.

And Ilyá went into the tent and said:

"A good appetite to you, Heroes of Holy Russia, and to thee, Samson, my dear godfather!"

"Come here, my dear godson!" said his godfather. "Come, old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom. Sit down and eat with us."

And he stood up on his nimble feet to greet Ilyá of Múrom. And they greeted each other and kissed each other, and he made Ilyá sit at their table to eat bread and salt with them. Twelve heroes were they, and Ilyá was the thirteenth. They all ate and drank, and when they had dined they came away from the oaken table and made their prayer to God.

Then the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom, spoke and said:

"My dear godfather, Samson, and you, O mighty Russian heroes! I pray you saddle your good horses and ride out through the free and open plain to glorious, royal Kiev town. For before our town of Kiev stands that dog, King Kálin with his great army. He will lay waste royal Kiev town and cut the peasants to pieces. He will send the churches of God up in smoke; and as for Prince Vladímir and Apráxia the Princess, he would cut off their turbulent heads. Now,

come ye and defend the Faith and country, and defend our glorious, royal Kiev town, and protect Prince Vladímir and Apráxia the Princess."

And Samson, his godfather, answered him:

"O my beloved godson, old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom! We will not saddle our horses and ride through the free and open plain to defend our Faith and country, and defend royal Kiev town. We will not defend the churches of God or protect Prince Vladímir and Apráxia the Princess. For the Prince in truth has many princes and nobles, and he gives them food and drink and rewards them. Nothing have we from Prince Vladímir."

"O Samson, my dear god-father," said the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom, "this would be no good thing on our part, to stand apart when King Kálin lays waste Kiev town, and cuts the peasants to pieces, and sends the churches of God up in smoke, and cuts off the turbulent heads of Vladímir the Prince and the Princess Apráxia. Come, saddle your good horses and ride through the open plain to Kiev town, to defend the Faith and country and glorious, royal Kiev, and to protect the churches of God, and Vladímir the Prince with the Princess Apráxia."

But unavailing were Ilyá's entreaties; not one hero would join him for the defence of Kiev town against the Tartar King and his hosts. Nothing had they from Prince Vladímir, so they would not help him.

When Ilyá saw that he could not persuade them, he went out from the white tent to his good hero-horse, took him by his silken bridle and led him away from the white linen cloth, and from the millet and spring corn. And Ilyá got upon his good steed and rode through the free and open plain, and up to the great Tartar army.

No bright falcon is this attacking geese and swans and flights of grey ducks, but a Hero of Holy Russia, advancing to attack that great host of Tartars.

He urged on his heroic steed, and rode on through the Tartar army. He began to ride over the Tartar soldiers and to trample them under his horse's feet, to tread them under foot and slay them with his spear. He fought with that great army, and beat down men as if he were mowing grass.

His good heroic horse spoke to him in human tongue:

"Come, thou glorious hero of Holy Russia! If thou dost trample down the Tartars, thou canst not by thyself conquer this great army. Ride thou up to that dog, King Kálin, and to that great host of soldiers. With him are mighty heroes and bold warrior-women of the plains. That dog, King Kálin has had three deep trenches made in the glorious open plain. When thou ridest on the free and open plain, thou wilt beat down many men of the forces, and when we come to the deep trenches I shall leap out of the first trench and will bear thee thence. When we come to the next

trench, I shall leap out and bear thee thence. But at the third deep trench I shall leap out, but I shall not bear thee out of it; in the deep trench wilt thou remain."

Now the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom, liked not this thing. In his white hand he took his whip with the lash of silk, and beat his horse upon the ribs, and thus he spoke to his steed:

"O thou faithless dog! I feed and water thee and provide for thee, and thou wouldst leave me in the open plain, even in those deep trenches!"

And Ilyá rode on through the free and open plain to that great army. And he trampled men under foot and speared them with his spear, and beat them down like mowing grass.

And Ilyá's strength grew no less, and when he came to the deep trench his good horse leapt out again and bore Ilyá thence, and he urged on his hero-horse through the free and open plain to that great army; and again he trampled the Tartars under foot, and speared them and beat them down like mowing grass. And Ilyá's strength grew no less; he sat his good horse and grew no older. And he cut his way through with his hero-horse and fell into the second trench. His good steed leapt out and bore Ilyá thence; and Ilyá again urged on his steed through the free and open plain, and again he trampled men under foot and speared them, and beat down Tartars like mowing grass. And Ilyá's strength became no less; he sat his good steed and grew no older; but he fell into the

third trench. He cut his way through the deep trench, and also out of the third trench leapt his good heroic steed, but Ilyá he bore not out thence, for Ilyá slipped off his good horse, and in the deep trench he remained.

And there came the Tartars running to catch the good horse, but the heroic steed would not allow himself to be taken, but galloped away through the open plain.

Then came the pagan Tartars and fell upon the old Cossack, Ilyá of Mürom, and they chained together his nimble feet, and bound his white hands, and the Tartars said:

“Cut off his turbulent head.”

But some of the Tartars said:

“There is no need to cut off his turbulent head; we will lead Ilyá to the dog, King Kálin, and what he commands that must we do.”

And they took Ilyá through the open plain to that pavilion of white linen, and led him in to the dog, King Kálin, and placed him before the King, and spoke thus to King Kálin:

“Now, O King Kálin, we have taken the old Cossack, Ilyá of Mürom, and have brought him to thee, O King. Do to him as thou wilt.”

Then the dog, King Kálin spoke to Ilyá, and said:

“Now, thou old Cossack, Ilyá of Mürom! A young puppy have they let loose against my great army! How couldst thou alone overcome my great host? Unchain Ilyá’s nimble feet and unloose his white hands.”

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

So the Tartars removed the bonds from his feet and hands, and the dog, King Kálin said:

“Now old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom! Sit down with me at my table, and eat of my sugar sweetmeats and drink of my honey drink. Wear my costly garments, and take from my chest of gold what thou needest. Serve no longer the Prince Vladímir, but serve the dog, King Kálin.”

And Ilyá answered the King:

“I will not sit at the same table with thee, nor eat thy sugar sweetmeats, nor drink of thy honey drinks. I will not wear thy costly garments, nor take gold from thy chest. I will not serve thee, thou dog, King Kálin, but will serve my Faith and country, and defend the churches of God and Vladímir the Prince and the Princess Apráxia.”

Then went forth the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom, from that tent of white linen, into the free and open plain. And the pagan Tartars began to press upon him and tried to surround him, hoping to gain possession of the old Cossack's gear. Ilyá saw that he must bestir himself, and he seized a Tartar by his feet and began to swing him round, began to strike the Tartars with the Tartar, till they began to flee from him. And the old Cossack went thus through the whole Tartar army, and came forth into the free and open plain, and cast the Tartar on one side.

Then Ilyá walked on through the open plain, and

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

he had neither horse nor weapons, but he whistled a mighty whistle, and his good steed heard him on the open plain, and galloped to the old Cossack his master. The old Cossack, Ilyá got upon his good steed and rode on through the plain till he came to a high hill, and he leapt up the hill and looked down towards the west. And in the west near the white tents stood the good horses of the heroes. Ilyá turned that way with his good war-horse. He took his strong bow and bent it with his white hands. He tightened the bowstring of silk, placed the sharp arrow, and into the white tent shot he that arrow, saying:

“Fly, O sharp arrow, fly to the white tent. Take the roof off the white tent, and go, thou arrow, to the white breast of my godfather. Creep thou into his breast and make a scratch, only a small scratch, a small scratch, not a large one. He sleeps there and takes his ease, and little can I do here alone.”

And he let go the silken bowstring and sent off that sharp arrow, and that sharp arrow whistled into that hero's white tent. It took the roof off the white tent and fell upon the white breast of Samson. It crept into his white breast and made but a small prick, and Samson, the renowned hero of Holy Russia, woke up from his deep sleep and opened his bright eyes. Quickly he stood upon his nimble feet and cried:

“Ho! my renowned heroes of Holy Russia! Quickly saddle your good horses and mount them. From my beloved godson has flown a sharp arrow through my glorious white tent. From my tent it took the roof,

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

and the arrow crept into my white breast, made a small prick, not a large one. The cross at my neck preserved me, Samson, the cross at my neck weighing forty stone. Had that cross not been upon my breast, my tempestuous head would have been torn off."

Then all those heroes of Holy Russia quickly saddled their good horses and rode through the open plain, towards Kiev town, to the Tartar army.

And from the high hill the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom, saw them, as they rode their good horses. He came down from the high hill and rode to meet the Russian heroes. Twelve in number were the heroes and Ilyá was the thirteenth.

They rode up to the Tartar host and pushed on their heroic steeds and began to fight the Tartar army. And they were trampling on the great army, and they came to the linen tent.

And in the tent that dog, King Kálin was sitting, and the heroes said:

"We will cut off the turbulent head of that dog, King Kálin."

"Why should we cut off his turbulent head?" said the old Cossack, Ilyá of Múrom. "We will take him to royal Kiev town, to the glorious Prince Vladímir."

So to the glorious Prince Vladímir at the royal town of Kiev they took the dog, King Kálin. To the white stone palace they took him, and Vladímir, Prince of royal Kiev, took that dog by his white hands and

HERO TALES OF RUSSIA.

made him sit at the oaken table, gave him sugar sweetmeats to eat and honey drink to drink.

And to Vladímir the Prince spoke King Kálin these words:

“Come now, Vladímir, Prince of royal Kiev, do not cut off my warlike head. We will write between us a great writing, and I, King Kálin, will pay thee tribute for ever and ever—I to thee, Prince Vladímir!”

And then in those good old times they all sang Glory!

And so they had peace for a time, but fresh hordes of Tartars still came, and the Russian heroes fought them, and sometimes the Russians could not overcome the Tartars, and in one of these great fights Ilyá, they say, was caught away from the fighting, and he was turned into stone, and his good horse with him.





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